



Vince Ryan
Harris County Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2016

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Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan praises
EPA proposed plan to clean up
San Jacinto River Waste Pits

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan praised the Environmental Protection Agency for their proposed plan to clean up the dangerous San Jacinto River Waste Pits.

The EPA's plan would remove an estimated 152,000 cubic yards of material contaminated with dioxin, the most dangerous chemical known to man, at an expected cost of \$96.9 million. The plan will ensure that no chemicals are released during this removal process.

"This is good news," County Attorney Ryan said. "We are very pleased that the EPA's preferred remedy, which is based on scientific evidence assessing risk factors, will lead to the removal of the contaminated material from the San Jacinto River."

County Attorney Ryan spoke with EPA Region 6 Administrator Ron Curry to express his gratitude for the work of the EPA and others.

Highly toxic paper mill waste was deposited along the river at the Interstate-10 bridge in the 1960s and has become partially submerged in the water. The waste pits were discovered by the government in 2005. The EPA named the pits a Superfund site in 2008. Although the companies responsible for putting the waste at this site put a cap over it in 2011, dioxin has leaked out through the years; in fact, a large hole was found in the cap late last year. Signs warn people not to eat fish or crabs caught near this location.

The Harris County Attorney's Office sued the companies involved in 2011, winning a \$29.2 million settlement from Waste Management Inc. and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corp. That money, split between the county and the state, is being used for improvements to the

communities along the river near the waste pits site. The third defendant, International Paper Co., won the lawsuit, but the County Attorney's Office is appealing.

"I urge everyone to send a comment urging the EPA to move forward with this proposal," County Attorney Ryan said. "You can send your comment by going to the County Attorney's website at www.harriscountycAo.org."